

# Re-Engineering Public Libraries of Varanasi

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## Abstract

The public library has a social mission; to provide various types of information, documents, books and e-services to fulfill information needs of its users. It exists to serve different communities. It works as a local gateway of knowledge which provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and various social groups. The government of India currently working on a smart city mission to enhances Indian cities<sup>1</sup>. The government of India has signed MOU with Japan to implement Kyoto city module for the development of Varanasi<sup>2</sup>. Public library services component appears to be missing in the smart city plan. In this study, 14 libraries were personally visited and data collected. Most of the public libraries are based on conventional services module which are inadequate in the current changing environment. Public library services need to be reengineered and some of the areas which need to be considered for this purpose are identified

**Keywords:** Public Library, Re-Engineering, Varanasi, ICT

## 1. Introduction

Since 2006, when the public library act has passed in Uttar Pradesh, it was expected that it would be a milestone; but public libraries of Uttar Pradesh continue to be in a bad shape. The value of public library services has been emphasized in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994)<sup>3</sup> which states: “The public library, the local gateway of knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups”. The definition of UNESCO shows how public library is important for the society. In the 21st century, information is a key factor of development of a country and it is important to strengthen public library services.

India has the highest percentage of young population in the world. There are many programs started by the Indian government like Startup India, Skill India, etc to make India a hub of skilled personnel.

In recent years, public libraries have been neglected. This study examines the status of public libraries in Varanasi. The suggested process of re-engineering will be based on implementing Information technology, promoting reading facility, connectivity with academic

libraries of Varanasi like Banaras Hindu University, Sampurnand Sanskrit University, and Kashi Vidyapeeth to transform public libraries.

## 2. Varanasi: A Place of Old Indian Culture

Varanasi is one of the oldest living city of Indian civilizations. The land of Varanasi (Kashi) has been the ultimate pilgrimage place for Hindus from ancient times.

Vaishnavism and Shaivism both have co-existed in Varanasi. Ayurveda probably originated from Varanasi and it is believed that plastic surgery and also had their origins in Varanasi. Maharshi Patanjali, the reformer of Ayurveda and Yoga, was associated with Varanasi. Varanasi is also famous for its trade and commerce, especially for silks, gold and silver brocades from centuries.

Varanasi is a great centre of Sanskrit literature since old ages. Varanasi is associated with the promotion of spiritualism, mysticism, Sanskrit and yoga. Varanasi has also been home to well-known authors including Tulasi Das, Premchand, to musicians including Ustad Bismillah Khan nad Pandit Ravishankar.

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### 3. Re-Engineering the Public Library

Re-engineering involves reducing cost, decreasing access time of information, raising the quality of literature and in a general way make the workplace more productive and intensive. The term re-engineering was first introduced by Michael Hammer in 1990 in a Harvard Business review article. Hammer and Champy says “Re-engineering is the Fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance such as cost, quality, service and speed. After reading this statement we can say Re-engineering practice is necessary for design the new paradigm of libraries. The process of re-engineering includes new work strategies, design activity and the implementation of changes in technological, human and organizational dimensions.

Library leaders must have the skills to create and nurture a new type of library culture in which change is encouraged and new visions of service can be implemented<sup>4</sup>. According to Susan Kent library leadership issues mainly revolve around three factors: architecture, technology, and planning. New age Public Libraries building should be designed to focus on the needs of the new generation of nontraditional library users. The library should work as meeting and knowledge sharing place for communities. It should offer comfortable space for leisure activity and social interaction of individual and group use. Library in its architecture and design can be a symbol of the values and vision of what the community is all about<sup>5</sup>. Creating a virtual presence in web and delivering services through on-line is a cost-effective model. Delivering critical information on-line could be extremely helpful for patrons, for example providing availability of blood donors and information about doctors in an area through public library website can become very helpful.

### 4. Role of Public Libraries

Public Libraries are established to achieve a social mission which is related to development of society. It provides information to different communities about education, daily life, health, culture and so on. Users are able to freely read and borrow anything which is available in the library system<sup>6</sup>. The library is seen as a safe place for people to meet or simply browse their information. Whatever may be the changes that are taking place, Public libraries should continue to focus on their established roles i.e. Culture, education, reading, literacy, and information<sup>7</sup> According to Ugbomah (1998)<sup>8</sup>, the establishment of a public library

is premised on the need to assist people to cater for their information needs which cover a wide area of education, social, political, economic and cultural facets. Generally, Public Library holds a wide range of information bearing materials that can be books and non-books. Some of the functions of public libraries are:

- The public library is a center of cultural activities,
- Library services can fulfill the recent educational needs of common people,
- The public library always supports building children’s reading skills,
- A public library is a suitable place for adult literacy classes,
- The public library remains important as a source of free reading materials, which is helpful for poor people,
- A library is a place where people can discuss their common interests, and
- The services of library always support the communities and their activities to enhance the quality of life.

### 5. Objective of Study

1. To find out the actual problems which affect the public libraries in Varanasi,
2. To find out ICT situation in public libraries, and
3. Suggest measures for reengineering public libraries of Varanasi.

### 6. Methodology

Survey and observation methods have been used in this study. Two libraries are almost closed; only 11 libraries have been considered for the study. Library visits and interview have been used for information collection. A structured personal interview schedule was prepared to collect data from the library staff.

### 7. Literature Review

Jones, David J<sup>9</sup> studied the public library system in South Australia during the period mid-1990s, and gave directions for planning public library. Haggstrom, Brit Morie<sup>10</sup> discuss public library policies for future development and suggested ways for enhancing public library services. Akparobore O.Daniel<sup>11</sup> studied adult’s education requirements and examine the importance of the public library manpower development. Singh<sup>12</sup> studied the current status of public libraries in Bihar. He also

discusses the position of public libraries at different levels - divisions, districts, subdivisions, blocks, and villages. The study identifies the reasons for poor performance of public library which is caused by low literacy rate and lack of fund. Deshpande<sup>13</sup> has studied the importance of public libraries in developing countries and has pointed out the silent characteristics of different services. The services which can be offered to the public are studied in detail: educating the illiterates, providing information services for women, conducting adult education classes, giving children's services, giving information services to the farmers, providing information on social evils, creating scientific temper and providing information services to the disadvantaged. Sahib Singh Verma<sup>14</sup> conducted a survey to figure out the existing conditions of public libraries in Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan and further examined the effect of library legislation on the development of public libraries and the role of public libraries in literacy movement.

Ranjiti<sup>15</sup> conducted a study on rural libraries in Kerala. Vijaykumar and Kumar<sup>16</sup> have made a quantitative study of the different aspects of rural libraries such as function,

staff, finance, collections, services and facilities in Shimoga district of Karnataka. Harvey<sup>17</sup> Emphasized that as society develops the lifestyle of a community also changes. The major impact of this was an increase in people's leisure time. The sociologists discussed that activities of the people in leisure time will become more cultural. The author suggested that librarians should come out with user-oriented services. Vanda Ferreira dos Santos<sup>18</sup> discussed public library as a tool of local economic development by re-focusing public library as an information center to meet the information needs of citizens, small business, new entrepreneurs and community institutions.

## 8. Current Situation of Public Library in Varanasi

The current scenario indicates that public libraries of Varanasi are in a very poor condition. These libraries are running without future plan, lack of information technology, and lack of funding and professional staff (Table 1).

Tulsi pustakalaya and Saidiya library have been closed

**Table 1.** Public libraries of Varanasi

Sl. No.	Name of Public Library	Founded by	Year of establishment	Status of Library
1.	Government District Library, Ardali Bazar, Pandeypur	District Administration	1960	Operational
2.	Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Vishveshwar Ganj,	Shiv Kumar Singh	1993	Operational
3.	Karmaical Library, Bansfatak	C.P. Karmaical	1972	Operational
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita Ghat	Sheth Gaurishankar Goy-anaka	1926	Operational
5.	Sharaswati Sadan Pustakalaya	Khedan Lal	1945	Operational
6.	Public Islamiya Library, Madanpura	Hakim Abdul Ali	1945	Operational
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	Bang samaj	1866	Operational
8.	Abhimanyu Pustakalaya, Gurubag.	Pandit Banarasi Lal Pandey	1932	Operational
9.	Adarsh Pustakalaya, Khojwa	Mahavir Prasad	1922	Operational
10.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	Angric Dhampal	1903	Operational
11.	Literacy of Kannad, Assi	NGO	2003	Operational
12.	Tulsi Pustakalaya, Bhaidani, Assi	Assi society	1908	Closed
13.	Saidiya Library, Madanpura	-	-	Closed
14.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	Vraj Vallabh Dwivedi	2006	Operational

for five years. The Bang Sahitya Samaj library, established in 1866 is one of the oldest libraries of Varanasi. The Varanasi district library is working from 1960 in Ardali bazaar. Adarsh pustakalaya khojwa and Abhimanyu pustakalaya are established by the contribution of local personalities.

In Uttar Pradesh, public libraries remain neglected as an institution of community information. Table 2 shows that except Government district library, other libraries do not have computer facility. During the library visit many gaps have been observed in public libraries. Most of the libraries face problems such as lack of library staff, Collections, and other facilities. The Lack of financial support is the main cause which has affected library services.

Table 3 shows the information about the strength of libraries. They have collections in different languages,

which is largely obsolete in terms of current needs of users. The Nagari Paracharini Library has a dynamic collection in Hindi language but has no plans for the future such as digitization of collections and library computerization. Table 4 shows that many important collections in Sanskrit and other languages are available in the libraries but no plans for electronic preservation of these.

## 9. Suggestion for Re-Engineering of Public Libraries

### 9.1 Fund Re-Allocation

Fund reallocation is a major issue for public libraries. RRRLF financial support is crucial for libraries. The central government should take initiative for distributing

**Table 2.** Overview of library function

Sl. No.	Name of public library	ICT services	Fund support	Library services time	Library staff
1.	Government District Library, Ardali Bazar, Pandeypur	Yes	Govt.		skilled
2.	Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Vishveshwar Ganj,	No	Self	11 A.M.- 5 A.M.	Unskilled
3.	Karmaical Library, Bansfatak	No	Self	10 A.M.- 6 P.M.	Unskilled
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita Ghat	No	Self	10 A.M.- 5 P.M.	Unskilled
5.	Sharaswati Sadan Pustakalaya	No	Self	10 A.M.- 4 P.M.	Unskilled
6.	Public Islamiya Library, Madanpura	No	Self	5 P.M.- 8 P.M.	Unskilled
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	No	Self	5 P.M.- 8 P.M.	Unskilled
8.	Abhimanyu Pustakalaya, Gurubag.	No	Self	No Time	Unskilled
9.	Adarsh Pustakalaya, Khojwa	No	Self	No Time	Unskilled
10.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	No	Self	10A.M.- 5 P.M.	Unskilled
11.	Literacy of Kannada, Assi	No	Self	10 A.M.- 5 P.M.	Unskilled
12.	Tulsi Pustakalaya, Bhaidani, Assi	-	-	-----	
13.	Saidiya Library, Madanpura	-	-	-----	
14.	SAAR Pustakalaya Pahariya	No	RRRLF	10 A.M.- 6 P.M.	Unskilled

**Table 3.** Strength of library

Sl. No.	Name of public library	Book strength	News-papers	Maga-zines	Reading hall facility	Language of collection
1.	Government District Library, Ardali Bazar, Pandeypur	42000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hindi, English, Urdu & Sanskrit
2.	Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Vishveshwar Ganj,	75000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hindi & Sanskrit
3.	Karmaical Library, Bansfatak	23000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hindi, English, Urdu Bengali, Marathi, Sanskrit
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita Ghat	6000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Urdu, German, French, Nepali, Pali, Tamil & Telugu
5.	Saraswati Sadan Pustakalaya	4000	Yes	No	Yes	Hindi, English, & Sanskrit
6.	Public Islamiya Library, Madanpura	8000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hindi, Urdu, English
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	3000	Yes	No	No	Bengali
8.	Abhimanyu Pustakalaya, Gurubag.	6000	Yes	No	Yes	Hindi, English, & Sanskrit
9.	Adarsh Pustakalaya, Khojwa	7000	Yes	No	Yes	Hindi, English, & Sanskrit
10.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	8000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hindi, English, & Sanskrit, Thai,
11.	Literacy of Kanna-da, Assi	4000	Yes	No	Yes	Hindi, English, & Sanskrit
12.	Tulsi Pustakalaya, Bhaidani, Assi	1200	No	-----	-----	-----
13.	Saidiya Library, Madanpura	-	No	-----	-----	-----
14.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	3000	Yes	No	Yes	Hindi, English, Urdu & Sanskrit

funds to all states and provinces. At the local level, the municipal corporation needs to provide funds for the public library, which is generated from car parking, taxes, and other sources. The central government should provide funds for public libraries from their annual budget. Beside this, a local committee should be - established for fund collection. The Varanasi has many small and large business groups and funds may be collected from these bodies. The public library should take support from local sponsors to enhance its funding. Every library should be encouraged to find sponsors who will adopt and support them.

**Table 4. Type of collection**

Sl. No.	Name of public library	Specific collection of libraries
1.	Government District Library, Ardali Bazar, Pandeypur	General collection
2.	Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Vishveshwar Ganj,	Old collection of AAJ News-paper, biography of Hindi writer, philosophy books, Hindi novels,
3.	Karmaical Library, Bansfatak	No specific collection,
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita Ghat	Old Sanskrit literature
5.	Saraswati Sadan Pustakalaya	Old Hindi story books
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	Urdu literature
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	Old Bengali literature
8.	Abhimanyu Pustakalaya, Gurubag.	General collection
9.	Adarsh Pustakalaya, Khojwa	General collection
10.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	Bauddhist literature, Srilankan literature
11.	Literacy of Kanna-da, Assi	Old Sanskrit literature,
12.	Tulsi Pustakalaya, Bhaidani, Assi	-----

13.	Saidiya Library, Madanpura	-----
14.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	No specific collection

## 9.2 Installation of Information Communication Technology

In a study Okolo<sup>19</sup> Indicates that in the age of information technology library needs ICT in order to give efficient services to its users. Library on the web is a common solution for enhancing the services and coverage to end user of the library. Recently Indian Government has launched the Digital India project for connecting common people through electronic medium and public library should use this opportunity to connect its user with online services. The library website should provide download facility for e-books, e-magazine, the latest news, educational videos covering education, agriculture, culture, science, current and world affairs. It should also provide information to tourists about Varanasi to know its culture, famous places, and history.

## 9.3 Human resource Management

Well-trained staff is an essential requirement for proper functioning of public libraries. RRRLF and the Banaras Hindu University can play useful roles in this regard.

## 9.4 Collection Development and Preservation

Management of collections includes the selection, acquisition, organization, storage and dissemination of relevant information for users. There has been great diversification in the range of electronic formats available due to the emergence of new technologies. Public libraries should make efforts to preserve local collections. Libraries should also seek book donations to strengthen their collections. Public libraries in Varanasi should also collaborate with each other and with other libraries to adopt a consortia approach to maximize available collections.

## 9.5 Library Services

The library should store and disseminate information about latest government plans and policies for common people. The library should be a local knowledge center for health, travel, history, biography, and business activities.

Information about local doctors, events, and other information should be available on the library website. The library should provide mobile library service to enhance its reach.

## 9.6 Library Events for user Connectivity

For connecting people with the public library, it is necessary to organize different types of events in the library. The local author festivals, art and literary competitions, essay writing challenges, general knowledge competitions, events on important days like women's day, International Labor Day, environment day, and so on should be organised in the library. Lectures, books launching and other activities will be good for the library.

## 10. Conclusion

The study suggests many steps to strengthen public library services in Varanasi.

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